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The Claims of the Gloucester Tenement Association —

Rev. Mr. Emerson delivered a discourse last Sabbath evening on the "Uses and Obligations of Wealth", in which he presented the claim of the Gloucester Tenement Association in a most effective manner. His text was from I Timothy 6: 17, 18 and 19th verses: Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches &c.

He first alluded to the danger of the love of money for its own sake which became the cause of the most corrupting selfishness, avarice, pinching pride, stinginess and greed, which shuts out every thought of benevolence and forgets to thank God for the talent and circumstances which have brought wealth. These are the things against which we are warned: for wealth is to be held not in absolute ownership but in stewardship, as it is given to man for a season only to be used for his own highest moral benefit and for the good of others. Wealth has its uses as well as its dangers. It is a blessing to all who look upon it when it is the result of economy, as the example of a man who is truly economical is always salutary. The man who spent his last dollar to take his

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family to the circus in June and then knocked at the door of all the churches in January for a few pennies to buy flour for ~~that~~ family; the fisherman who spends half ~~the~~ earnings of his last trip at the nearest liquor shop, cannot pass the house of a rich man without being reminded ~~that~~ this evidence of plenty is the result of economy and frugality. Wealth is a blessing to its owner and the whole community when it stands for industry. ×× The dangers of wealth were next presented, not the obligations of the rich ×× and then followed the claims of the fishermen upon ~~that~~ plan of benevolence known here as The Gloucester Tenement Association.

First the peculiar claims of the fishermen upon this community were defined. The Capitalist owes something to this class, who amidst the danger of the sea and with a fearful loss of life does the work which alone can make capital remunerative. The owners of vessels, and the man who buys and sells such property, owe much to this class. Every tradesman and lawyer and minister, the prosperity of every branch of business in the place must in the end look to the fishermen for support. This appeal then is not only to those who have money in any considerable amount, nor only to ship owners and fish merchants

whose wealth has been made by the skilful use of the labors of the fishermen, but to business men, to mechanics, to every man in this community who has a comfortable home. They all share in the common prosperity of Gloucester. That property is not possible for a single day without the fishermen. Let him stay his hand, let the fishing schooner furl her sails, and the shops on Front Street must close to-morrow; every branch of business must languish; a large amount of capital would be idle, the population ~~two~~ would be obliged to move away. Those churches with their present expenses would scarcely be self supporting.

The perils to which fishermen are exposed in their calling is a consideration. When is there a branch of business with such a fearful loss of life? Since last January, I am informed by the editor of the Advertiser, 115 men have been lost who sailed out of this port. The most unhealthy mechanical labor known, is nothing to it; the most perilous occupations known to man do not present any such mortality. Even war, which is supposed to be so terribly destructive, does not nearly equal the percentage of death which takes place in the Gloucester fisheries. Send out 1000 soldiers to war and the same number to Georges, and taking the average loss of

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life in modern wars, more soldiers would be alive at the end of the year than fishermen. Since 1830, when fishermen first began to go to Georges, 187 vessels have been lost, and 1130 men. According to the files of the Advertiser, the value of the property lost has been $500,000. It is estimated ~~that~~ full one-third of those lost were married, and that seven hundred children have been made orphans by these sad disasters. During the year 1862, 18 vessels and 148 men were lost. This was the most disastrous year in the history of the town. During this present year, 115 men have been sacrificed and 40 women made widows. Proportioning the number of deaths with the whole number engaged, no war in the last fifty years has destroyed life so fast as this. Most of these families are poor and many of them in a very destitute condition. Does not the very fact of the peril and death attending this occupation, greater than that attending any other in the world, render the claims of the Gloucester poor peculiarly strong upon ~~the~~ all classes in this community?

The thing proposed is this: Some benevolent-hearted women in Gloucester wish to raise money enough to erect a tenement house large enough to accommodate ten families. This is a commencement and ~~e~~experiment. A society

has been formed with 130 members, embracing many of our most worthy people. Between $3000 and $4000 have already been subscribed. The object of the Association has in view is not to <u>give away</u> rents, thus making the tenement house a house of charity, like an almshouse, but to <u>let</u> the rooms to the widows of lost fishermen at such a price as will keep the building in repair, make improvements, and perhaps furnish a surplus with which to commence other efforts of the same kind. By this plan a poor widow can hire clean and decent rooms at a moderate price, instead of paying exorbitant rats for ill ventilated, unhealthy quarters. Many are not only obliged to take unhealthy quarters, but oftentimes must take rooms in houses that are disreputable, where no decent and respectable woman would wish to go, but are obliged to, because Gloucester is over-crowded, and they cannot pay for anything better. There are charitable committees in all the churches that can tell you things that would touch your hearts. Last winter a family was found, consisting of a mother and five children, living in one small attic room under the eaves of the house, the children all sick with scarlet fever. Another family, ejected by their landlord, found refuge in a room where there was no fire during the whole

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winter, and no chance to build one. The cooking was done in the room of another family. Every winter there are families among us where eating, cooking, sleeping, sickness and dying goes on in one small, ill ventilated room.

The influence of such a tenement house as is proposed, was then spoken of at length, and cheerfulness, comfort, moral and social elevation and a tendency to thrift and cleanliness, were among the benefits which would result to those who availed themselves of its advantages. The history of the tenement house movement in New York and Boston, and especially among the poor of London, was very graphically described, and was replete with interest to every benevolent heart, proving that such enterprises when well conducted, were not only instrumental of doing much good, but were self-sustaining, and paid a dividend of five per cent., which could be used for other good purposes in aiding the poor.

By these experiments we may learn the way. The enterprise deserves the earnest attention and sympathy of our citizens. It was a charity, but not that false charity which gives a man a dollar when it ought to give him employment, but that does something for the actual help of permanent

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elevation of the poor, a charity that no more need touch the pride of any, than the advantages of the common school touches the pride of the poorest of our citizens. This would probably lead to other benevolences, such as an employment society, which shall be self-sustaining, and a fishermans home, where board could be obtained without the temptation to drink. He appealed in its behalf on the ground of gratitude that should lead every business man in our midst to see that he owes his prosperity, under God, in part at least, to the trials and perils of the fishermen. It was deserving support on the ground of Christian sentiment, the teaching of Jesus, of brotherly love, whereby we learn that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and that inasmuch as we do it to these of these, we do it unto Christ our Lord.

We feel certain that the above opinions attach

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